

## Advanced dentistry



JERRY SIEBENMARK / WB.J

Charlie Fox, associate dean of Wichita State University's College of Health Professions, left, and Peter Cohen, dean, are the school's point men on developing a dental residency program, which is expected to launch in fall 2008.

## WSU lands state's first dental residency program

BY JERRY SIEBENMARK

Citing a Kansas Health Institute report that shows a steady and significant drop in dental services in Kansas over the next 25 years, Wichita State University is creating a dental residency program that is expected to launch in the fall semester of 2008.

The program, designed to instruct dental school graduates in advanced dental techniques, is one way to increase over the next few decades the number of dentists in Kansas.

WSU officials say that report, released in January 2005, was the impetus for the program, identifying the university as a possible site for an

advanced education in general dentistry program. A St. Louis consulting firm, Triangle Associates, also conducted a study for Oral Health Kansas last year to determine the feasibility of starting a dental residency program in the state, and recommended WSU as the site.

"The residency program takes (their skills and knowledge) up a notch," says Peter Cohen, dean of WSU's College of Health Professions. "They're going to be proficient compared to the minimum competency level they have out of dental school."

State officials say they believe the program

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will help lure back some Kansas residents who leave the state to attend dental school, such as at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, but never return.

"It's an opportunity to try and keep some dentists in the state of Kansas," says Kevin Robertson, executive director of the Kansas Dental Association. "We think it could be a very productive program."

## 'HIGH EFFORT'

Cohen says students will initially come from UMKC, which operates the dental school closest to Kansas.

Barry Daneman, director of advancement for UMKC's dentistry school, says students that will be targeted include the 20 from Kansas his school accepts every year. Some have been going to other programs across the country, while other Kansas students have been attending UMKC's general dentistry residency program, which accepts eight students a year.

The priority for the program is finding a director, who must be a dentist but also must have several years experience in dental residency programs or dental education.

Cohen and Charlie Fox, associate dean of WSU's health professions college, say the university has retained a search firm that specializes in dental education administrators.

"The key issue is getting the right director for this program," Fox says.

They'll need a director to get accreditation for the program from the Dental Commission on Accreditation. They'll also need a director soon who will be able to write grant proposals as well as put some

creativity into how the program will work.

In addition to the hiring of a search firm, Cohen says he and Fox have attended dental education conferences to recruit candidates. Cohen is also putting to use relationships he developed when he was associate dean of academic planning and development for the Baylor College of Dentistry.

Finding funding for the program isn't as much of an issue. This spring the Kansas Legislature earmarked \$415,000 for each of three years to help finance the startup of the program.

Four nonprofit organizations have also committed a total of \$800,000 to the program: Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation, United Methodist Health Ministry Foundation, The Sunflower Foundation and Children's Miracle Network.

"We see this as a huge step towards helping alleviate the decline of the number of dentists we have in Kansas," says Karen Finstad, executive director of the Delta foundation.

It will take nearly \$5 million to finance the program in its first three years, Fox says.

The program is expected to accept four students in its first semester. They hope to increase that number to eight students within three years.

Cohen's goal is to have dentists from Wichita and across the state to serve as adjunct faculty to the program, but adds it will be the director's job to find and recruit them.

They expect to have a director in place sometime in the fall semester.